



Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

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News Release

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Local Teacher Recognized for Outstanding Teaching Innovation

Science Teacher from Mountain Trail Middle School Selected as 2005 Presidential Award State Finalist

Awardees Announced in March 2006

Washington, DC – Did your teacher ever take you to a theme park or use a model of a rollercoaster to teach physics concepts in class, allow you to learn fractions and angles by building a gingerbread house, or measure force and motion on the basketball court? Highly qualified science and mathematics teachers bring these types of lessons to life for their students. One of these remarkable teachers, Linda Coyle, a Science teacher at Mountain Trail Middle School in Phoenix, is being rewarded for her success in using innovative methods and strategies in her classroom. Coyle has been named a state finalist for the 2005 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), the nation's highest honor for K-12 teaching in these fields.

Established by Congress in 1983, and administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation, the Presidential Awards allow for each state to select up to three mathematics and three science teachers as state finalists. From this field of state finalists, a maximum of 108 Presidential Awardees are selected representing the 50 states and four U.S. jurisdictions. Recipients of the 2005 Presidential Awards will be announced during a week of celebration events in March 2006 in Washington, DC.

When Coyle was told she was a state finalist, she said, "I was very humbled and happy! There are so many great science teachers in my state, I was very excited and honored at this nomination."

Coyle is one of the 253 state finalists for the prestigious Presidential Award. Her teaching style is key to her success in the classroom. "I view my role as a teacher as a gentle shepherd. I don't lead as much as I keep my students moving in the right direction. I'm always trying to get them to think on their own, prodding them with questions and situations that make them think, and making them pose the question, 'what if...'. I always try to tie whatever we are studying to something relevant in their lives," said Coyle. "Middle school children are natural risk-takers. I try and encourage that aspect of their personalities and encourage them to do the same when it comes to learning science. I believe that to learn science, you must 'do science.'"

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“Presidential Awardees represent exceptional professional models of what we are looking for in science and mathematics teachers. They are highly qualified in their fields, deeply knowledgeable about their subjects, and equipped with the methods and strategies that improve teaching and learning in science and mathematics,” said Celeste Pea, Ph.D., Program Director of Elementary, Secondary, and Informal Education programs at the National Science Foundation. “They strive to provide opportunities for their students to reach their potential in their respective schools and communities. Through this recognition, we hope to motivate similar creativity in other teachers, and to attract new recruits to the mathematics and science teaching profession.”

“I decided to become a teacher because I always enjoyed school. I had a wonderful biology teacher in high school who instilled a love of learning in me and really sparked an interest in science. I have a natural curiosity of how things work, and I think it’s that infectious curiosity that keeps my students interested in my class. I love what I do, and I believe I convey that to my students,” said Coyle when asked about why she became a teacher.

The Presidential Awards are a great opportunity for the country to recognize the importance of all teachers. “The Presidential Award is the top prize a science teacher can be given,” said Coyle. “I feel like I can really help my fellow teachers by being in a position to be a pro-active advocate for them and quality science education.”

The goal of the Presidential Awards is to identify and recognize highly qualified teachers. As part of the recognition process, Awardees will take part in a weeklong series of networking and professional development activities in Washington, DC. In addition, each Awardee will also receive \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation. For more information about PAEMST, see forms and instructions available at: www.paemst.org.